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DEPT FOR EAP/MTS

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TAGS: [EINV](#) [CACS](#) [EAGR](#) [SENV](#) [RP](#)

SUBJECT: VOLCANIC ERUPTION POSES NO THREAT

¶1. On March 21, Mount Bulusan, 370 miles southeast of Manila, experienced a moderate eruption. The area around the volcano is uninhabited, and the situation appears to pose no immediate danger to life or property. Sorsogon Province is mainly agricultural and rural with a population of 650,000. Post contacted the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (PHIVOLCS), and Director Renato Solidum told econoff that he is still detecting ongoing moderate seismic activity, which he expects will continue for several weeks; he added that not one of the 15 eruptions over the last 150 years resulted in a major event. The GRP warned residents to avoid entering the four-kilometer zone that surrounds the volcano.

¶2. Post's American Citizen Services (ACS) section has been following the situation since the volcano's initial eruption at 22:58 hours, March 21 (local time). There are 144 American citizens registered as residents in Sorsogon province and only one is reported to be living in the town of Bulusan, about 10 miles from Mount Bulusan itself. A few Amcits live in neighboring towns, but the majority live in cities far north of the volcano. ACS is attempting to contact the one 87-year old Amcit Bulusan resident, as well as Amcits in surrounding towns. The Peace Corps' only volunteer in Sorsogon province lives far from the volcano. (Peace Corps sent out an internal warden message on March 23 advising volunteers to avoid the danger zone and to defer unnecessary travel within the vicinity.) We contacted the American Chamber of Commerce and the GRP Board of Investments; both confirm that there are no known U.S. businesses in the area. Embassy continues to monitor the situation, but does not expect American citizens will be affected.

¶3. Encompassing a little over 1500 square miles, Sorsogon Province forms the southeastern tip of Luzon's Bicol Peninsula and includes 15 municipalities and one city with a total population of 650,000, according to a 2000 census. Primary economic activities are agriculture, forestry, and fishing. If volcanic activity escalates, PHIVOLCS may recommend evacuation within an eight to ten kilometer radius, an historically safe distance, according to Dr. Solidum. The Philippines' last major volcanic activity was in 2001 when the Mayon volcano erupted near Legaspi City in neighboring Albay province. During that eruption, PHIVOLCS helped to manage the phased evacuations of 50,000 to 60,000 people, with no deaths. Solidum attributed the safety record to the Institute's monitoring and forecasting. PHIVOLCS will continue to monitor Bulusan and take any necessary measures to ensure the safety of residents.

KENNEY